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Hempstead Plains Farm Family

ALBERT H. BERG was a potato and peach farmer on the Hempstead Plains for 57 years. He bought a farm about two miles from his birthplace, and was married the same year. He died at 86 in 1949 at the farmhouse on Hempstead Turnpike.

A daughter, Alberta May Berg Beierling, has written autobiographical sketches of her childhood on the farm. She opens them with the following excerpt:

In the late 19th century, actually on May 13, 1897, a daughter was born to a farmer and his wife in his farmhouse at East Meadow, Long Island. Having been already blessed with two beautiful daughters, aged two and four years, they had prayed for a son, to be named Albert after his father. Alas! Another girl. All neighboring farmers sympathized. A farmer needs a son. However, my parents rallied quickly, accepting the inevitable, and named the baby Alberta May.

Looking east through the kitchen windows of the Berg farmhouse that merry month of May, and for many years to come, one could see a panorama . . . a stretch of land like a blanket of blue. It was a carpet of bird's-foot violets as far as the eye could reach across the Hempstead Plains toward Island Trees. My father and mother had come to this farm on their wedding day, April 12, 1893, and they lived on it the rest of their lives.

The Berg farm, formerly the Duryea farm, halfway between Hempstead and Farmingdale, was itself divided almost exactly in two by the Hempstead Turnpike. It was bordered on the west by Newbridge Road, on the north by the Plains, on the east by a grassy hill or slope. In winter we used the slope for coasting on the snow with children of neighboring families. In summer we swung on birches north of the farm and we picked huckleberries south of the



Mr. and Mrs. Albert Hansen Berg and their six children in 1905. Top row, left to right: Dorothy Ellen, "Dad", Alice Wilhelmina, Alberta May, Elizabeth Hunt Berg (mother), Estelle Healy who later married William Lowden and lived in the handsome Carman-Lowden house near the corner of Hempstead Turnpike and Front Street, East Meadow. In front, left is Sadie Elizabeth, then aged 11, and at right one-year-old Marion Hunt.

farm. We seven siblings spent many happy hours on these 45 acres our father had bought on a mortgage.

I remember vividly the day that he paid off the mortgage. Mother was upstairs when father returned by horse and wagon from Hempstead. As he entered the dining room, lowering his head as always to escape the lintel, he asked me: "Where's your mother, Bert?" I think I was the only one in the room at the time, probably practicing on our big old square piano. See why I was the only one in the room?

Then we heard her descending the old

wide uncarpeted stairway. Dad quickly put his broad back to the door to block her entrance, grinning at me, and calling out, "You can't come in!"

"Albert, let me in!" She knocked again and again. "No, you can't come in," he repeated, "It's my house now!"

Suddenly he opened the door and grabbed her up in his arms. "It's my house now!" They both laughed and hugged each other, full of joy.

Legally, I suppose it was *his* house. It was in his name, not hers, and he had paid off the mortgage that day. What a wonderful day!